

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-6 and 8-23 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8-20 are rejected. Claims 3, 4 and 21-23 are objected to but would be allowable if placed into independent form. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of allowable claim 3 and parent claim 2 in order to secure its allowability. Claims 2 and 3 have been cancelled. Claims 4-6, which were dependent on any of claims 2 or 3 have been amended to depend from claim 1. Claim 15 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of allowable claim 21, which has been cancelled. Claims 22 and 23 have amended to depend from claim 15.

***Claim Rejection - 35 USC 102***

**Claims 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Provance (6,731,613).** This rejection is traversed for at least the following reasons.

Applicants have amended independent claims 1 and 15 to incorporate the limitations of the allowable dependent claims 3 and 21, respectively. Thus, claims 1 and 15 now should be allowable.

As to claim 2, the rejection is moot in view of its cancellation.

As to the remaining dependent claims that stand rejected, the dependency of these claims has been adjusted where appropriate to have them depend from claims 1 or 15, as appropriate. Thus, these claims should be patentable as well.

Applicants note that the priority date of the present application is July 14, 2000, on the basis of a claim to priority from Provisional Application 60/218,216. The priority date is only one month later than the filing date of the Provance patent (June 14, 2000). Applicants believe that the Provance patent can be withdrawn on the basis of earlier conception, however, this strategy will be followed in a divisional application to be filed in order to obtain copendency with the present application. Accordingly, no rights are waived by the present amendment and no estoppels should be created.

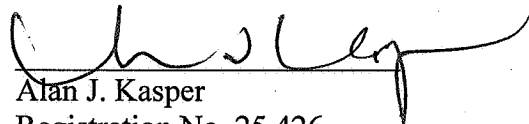
In view of the above, examination of all of claims 1-6 and 8-23 is earnestly requested and a favorable consideration and allowance of this application is now believed to be in order, and

Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111  
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such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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